1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

the ceremonial objects and women usually have a good wash at least once a month; grown men on the other hand wash exceedingly seldom. But even though they are so dirty they are in comparison with the Tibetans relatively clean; it is true that they have a much more clement climate and an abundance of water, so that there is no external reason for their being as dirty as they are.

vii

The chief attention that a full-grown Lepcha pays to his person is the care of his hair. Until about puberty children of both sexes have their hair cut short, and lamas always have their heads shaved or close-cropped; but the hair of a woman or layman must never be cut after *asék*. Indeed were a woman after betrothal to cut her hair it would be *nam-toak* and would produce the death of a member of her family. Men wear their hair in a single long plait hanging down their back, often with a thread ending in a tassel braided into it; women nearly always have their hair in two plaits, taken from either side of the nape of the neck; sometimes these two plaits are bound separately round the head; others wear them with the two ends joined together with a piece of braid. Men nearly always have longer hair than women; many men had plaits reaching down to the waist; the women's hair rarely fell below their shoulders. Men with long pigtails often twist them round their heads when working, as the swinging queue gets in the way. In the presence of a superior men and women always let their hair hang down as a mark of respect; and the first act of a nun on coming to worship at the monastery is to remove her head-cloth and let her hair fall on her shoulders.

Once a week if possible the hair is unplaited, if necessary deloused, washed, oiled, and then replaited. With the exception of a spouse and the parent-in-law of the opposite sex anybody may perform this service for anybody else; even adult brothers and sisters may dress each other's hair. Hair-dressing is considered an impersonal and unintimate act; at feasts and large gatherings there is often a long line of people seated with each arranging the hair of the person in front of him.

Long and lustrous hair is one of the points of beauty for members of both sexes; other points which are considered desirable are a straight nose, a flat face, a fair rosy complexion, a round head and a straight body without prominent curves. Big eyes, small eyes,

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

832 pop-eyes or folded eyelids are ugly; so are dimples, too big or too
826 small a mouth, a protuberant bottom or big breasts. Particularly disliked is too big a head or a 'curved face', that is a face which in silhouette does not fall into one plane. White and even teeth and a pleasant smile are also desirable. Men and women are considered equal in beauty but a woman is considered to be at her most beautiful at the age of twelve, a man at the age of twenty. It is considered that on the whole a beautiful man will marry a beautiful woman and an ugly man an ugly woman, but this does not happen invariably; and the ugliness of a person is not considered to be a valid reason for refusing a marriage. A woman's beauty is considered to be somewhat spoilt by childbearing.

826 The differences in beauty of children are remarked but little importance is paid to childish beauty as it is considered essentially impermanent. A girl with a big head and eyes and body and feet is considered somewhat man-like and it is thought that she will work slowly in everything. A man with small features and particularly long eyelashes is considered to look like a woman; such a person will be a swift runner and a clever climber of trees and rocks, able to go where others cannot. Apart from these qualities the idea of temperament is not linked at all with physical appearance.

Freckles are considered disfiguring; they are the *tamtoom* of children who are not orphans eating bamboo shoots when the rice is ripe. 'Just as children have parents above them so rice has bamboo above it; consequently children who have no parents are not affected by this.' Black marks on the skin are caused by young people eating pig's stomach. There is no remedy for either of these disfigurements. On the whole beauty is not of much positive emotional importance; it is only when people are markedly unbeautiful that they are liable to be shunned. Beauty adds to the desirability of strangers as sexual partners; I do not think it is remarked at all in people with whom one is familiar. At the big monastery feasts I often asked people whom they considered to be the best-looking person present; when they did not produce an obscene joke as an answer they would usually refuse to pronounce judgement unless there was a stranger present, in which case the stranger was nearly always chosen. Good-quality and clean clothes and jewels add to the self-confidence of the wearer and to a certain extent enhance the wearer's beauty; but clothes and jewels could
832 never be a substitute for beauty. Nobody would think of borrowing
426 other people's clothes or jewels in order to appear finer and richer

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

a day until they can walk and look after themselves. Except at these washings the baby's body is not cleaned. Children do not usually have any fitted clothes until they can walk, but are instead wrapped in loose cloths. 854

The teaching of sphincter control is meant to start at the age of three months when the children are taken out on to the balcony at regular intervals; they should learn to cry when they want to be taken out and by the time they can crawl should be able to crawl there by themselves. This is, however, an ideal rather than a real statement; sphincter control and bodily cleanliness are not regarded as of emotional importance, and some quite big children refuse to accept the discipline and excrete inside the house, especially if the house has bamboo flooring. Children aged three or over who cannot or will not learn sphincter control are considered to show a bad prognosis; when they grow up they 'will show forth a bad heart (disposition)'. If big children are dirty they may be given a smack or other slight punishment; but as often as not no notice will be taken and the dirt just cleared away by some older person. Only if the child spoils or dirties somebody else's property will he be severely punished. When a child can move about by itself it is taught to go outside to relieve itself; it is always accompanied by an older person till it is quite big to keep away the scavenging dogs and pigs. It is cleaned, and taught to clean itself with sticks and leaves. 863

Lepchas say that children should start noticing things at two months, start crawling at six months, stand when they are a year old, and walk three months later. This time-table seems to me to be in point of fact over-quick and none of the children under eighteen months that I saw could walk. The child is helped to stand and walk a little by its elder siblings. If a baby learns to walk early it is a sign that the next child is coming soon. Children are not expected to talk until they are two years old, and certainly not before they can walk; but they understand certain baby sounds, such as *ka-ka*—don't—*aah-dji*—take care—and *bam-bam*—keep quiet—in their second year. 856

The baby's first tooth should appear at the age of eight months and it should have all its milk teeth within the year unless by any misfortune a pregnant woman has looked at the baby, in which case the baby will not teeth until the woman is delivered and her child also teeths. It is most important that with a boy the teeth should come through the lower jaw first and with a girl through the 826

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

upper. Should the contrary occur it will indicate that the child is a victim of the evil supernatural Sumoo Thor. When such people grow up all their domestic animals will fail; if the child is a girl her husband will die young and she will be left an early widow; if a boy all his children will die in infancy. There is no unanimity as to whether parents would inform their children when they grow older of such evil prognosis; the general opinion is that though parents themselves would not tell the children the elder siblings are liable to know of the fact and to mention it in the course of family squabbles. Tobgé's sister is believed to have Sumoo Thor as she has pointed teeth in the front of her lower jaw. People have teased her about this but she has replied that she 'doesn't care, and anyhow her odd teeth are the result of a *tamtoom* and have nothing to do with Sumoo Thor.' There is nothing to do to avert the misfortunes from teeth arising in the wrong place; it is the destiny following a child from its previous incarnation. Similarly moles above the level of the eyes in boys and below them in girls portray the presence of Sumoo Thor; moles in the contrary positions are lucky.

A baby should not be given either bear or frog to eat or it will be late in speaking. You can tell from the way a child cries when it is six months old if it is going to be dumb or not.

Until children start walking they do not usually have clothes at all; in the house they are wrapped up in warm folded cloths, not so tightly as to restrict their movements, and usually lie on their back on the floor or raised bed-partition. For the first month or six weeks and occasionally longer they are carried in the arms; after that they are carried on the back of a parent or elder sibling. There are two positions in which the child is held on the back; the most usual is a semi-foetal one with the enveloping cloth catching the child under the knees which are folded up to the body so that the child only touches its carrier from the knees to the feet and with the upper part of the body. Occasionally, however, children, especially when they have passed one year, are fastened with their legs spread on the hips of the carrier. The baby is completely enveloped in a big cloth folded three or four times, which goes round the baby's body and is fastened round the front of the carrier. It always needs the help of a second person to place a baby on the carrier's back; the carrier supports the baby from behind with his or her hands and the helper folds the cloth round and supports the baby while the carrier ties it. The enveloping cloth usually comes up to the neck and the baby's head lolls com-

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

833 potent; trustworthy people said that when they were first married they would copulate with their wives five or six, and even eight or nine times in the course of the night, though they would then be tired the next day. I have got no comparable information from women but such statements were often made in mixed company without the women present making any comment or in any way expressing incredulity. This potency diminishes around the age of thirty, but copulation once nightly is still the general rule for married couples. Tafoor claimed that in his youth he was almost indefatiguable, but says that now he only sleeps with his wife once every three or four nights; this is the reason why he is relatively fat, for chastity induces fatness. It is believed that people accustomed to regular copulation will feel extremely uncomfortable for the first few days if for any reason their partner is removed; but it is considered that people over thirty should be able to support long periods of chastity (with the exception, some laymen say, of the lamas, who cannot do without sex even for a week).

The normal position for Lepchas copulating is for the woman to lie absolutely prone and relaxed, while the man kneels in front of her between her legs. In situations where discretion is necessary both parties lie on their sides, copulation taking place *a retro*; and in some sudden and quick encounters both parties remain standing, the woman leaning against a tree or wall. During copulation the woman lies completely motionless and relaxed, but this passivity is not equated with non-participation, and the orgasms of both sexes are considered identical in nature. The Lepcha attitude to 831 semen is practically the same as that commonly held in Europe; it is thought to be a secretion which is constantly produced and stored against use, so that a husband who has been for some while separated from his wife will have particularly large reserves. The testicles are regarded as the reservoirs of semen; they are not paid much attention to in conversation and have little rôle in the constant flow of sexual jokes. It is believed that if a man's testicles [826 842] hang lower than his penis he is more likely to be fertile than if the contrary is the case. Semen is considered to be a rather unpleasant and soiling substance, and these characteristics are advanced as one of the major reasons against masturbation. Lepcha men consider that copulation is most enjoyable either with a very young girl or with a woman who has borne more than one child; in the latter case there is the added advantage that copulation is thought to be much less exhausting. Men with large penises are considered to give

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

Men with large penises are considered to give women more immediate satisfaction, but to be on the whole less fertile; there are, however, some anecdotes told of mothers procuring large-penised lovers to impregnate their daughters when their husbands have been unable to do so. The size and shape of the genitals of the men in the neighbourhood is a common subject for conversation; and such exact anatomical details are known and described that it would seem as though the privacy and secrecy enjoyed after the fire is damped down were by no means absolute.

A couple of Tibetan prostitutes live at Mangan on the other side of the Teesta River to cater for the transitory Tibetan muleteers. A couple of the Lepchas of Lingthem have made use of their services for the fee of one rupee. Kurma said he preferred these women because, in contrast to Lepcha women, they were energetic during the act. The hiring of these women constitutes a display of superfluous wealth and an act of dare-devilry; the Lepchas consider their presence as one of the comic curiosities of the neighbourhood, but think it rather absurd for anybody to pay for sexual intercourse.

It is considered by most Lepchas extremely dangerous to sleep with a menstruating woman; Chala Mandal said that he personally would not be afraid, but the general belief is that the man who does so will be unwell and doltish afterwards for a period that some men put at a week and others at three years. It is a general belief that women are particularly desirous directly after menstruation and a few consider that impregnation is most likely to take place at that time. Old Hlatam the 'poisoner' has even gone so far as to warn her daughters to be particularly careful of that period so as to avoid bastards; but this belief is by no means generally held, and it would seem to be an importation from the Nepali, who, Major Morris says, have turned this belief into a cultural act of faith. During their actual periods girls will tell their lovers that they are unwell, but the great majority pay no attention to the subsequent days. There is also a vague belief that it is possible to foretell conception if the man is especially tired and the woman especially passionate.

Although sexual enjoyment is believed to continue for both sexes up to an advanced old age, the sexual activities of old people are considered rather ludicrous. One of Chudo's most successful and appreciated jokes was his vivid description of the noises he heard nightly coming from the sleeping place of his sixty-nine-year-old 'grandfather' the second Dorjé Lapoon and his seventy-four-year-old bride Pumri; and the first Dorjé Lapoon's attempts at eighty-

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

play; and a father will want his son to work in the fields." [224] [868]

When a man starts to hunt he must on no account eat any of the flesh of the first hundred animals he kills, unless by any chance he shoots them with a gun, in which case it does not matter. After killing a hundred animals the hunter will [826] find that he has acquired a slight hollow in his right shoulder-blade; and when this appears it is an indication that he need no longer observe this prohibition, the disregard of which is [753] thought to cause body sores and even leprosy. In the meantime the young hunter will hand his game over to friends and relations, who in return will give him chickens and eggs.

Pong Rum is the master of all animals, and for this reason [776] he is the patron saint of hunters. Once every year, generally in October, all hunters make a sacrifice to this god. Parched [782] rice, *chi*, fish, wild birds' flesh, ginger, arum, sugar-cane, banana, and some sticks of wormwood are offered to the god, and it is important that no woman should take any part in their preparation: nor, if possible, should she even know that they are being got ready, or the hunter will have no luck during the forthcoming year. There is no actual ceremony, the hunter merely taking all these articles and depositing them in some place in the forest where the god will see them.

In addition to this annual sacrifice, every time a hunter kills an animal or bird it is usual to singe its entrails and leave them as an offering to Pong Rum. Whenever a wild animal or bird is killed the god is always present and can be heard; he sounds like a stone whistling through the trees. As soon as this noise is heard the hunter will put the animal on the ground and offer it to the god, speaking very slowly and distinctly; but he leaves only the burned entrails behind. On his return home he should take care that no woman sees the animal's head, or it means that he will be unlucky next time he goes out hunting.

A man who goes in for hunting bears makes a kind of bamboo spring, which he fastens into a tree. If the bear treads on this it is at once precipitated into a pit below,

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

time as he unlocks it again. This applies even to his own 843
house-door, which he may close but not fasten. He must not tie up any article of clothing in such a way that it forms a bag; and if the string by which his ordinary bag is suspended from his shoulder happens to break he must on no account pick it up; he may, however, recover any grain that spills out. He must not eat animals which have met their death by accident, or which have been killed by some beast of prey; nor should he look upon recently killed animals of any kind. There is no objection to his killing animals; but if he does so he must run away at once and let others deal with the carcass. He must not eat birds caught in a trap; nor touch the iron or rope of a horse's bridle (this is somewhat unexpected in a completely horseless community), or both the mother and child will certainly die. Should he by any chance inadvertently touch a bridle during the period of his wife's pregnancy the resulting evil may be averted by keeping a bridle in the house and having it waved over his wife at the actual time of delivery.

If he is making a bamboo mat, for instance, he must be careful not to finish it off completely; he should always leave a little piece at the end undone, and this applies to any other similar kind of work. There is no objection to either of the parents eating fruit which grows on trees or bushes; but the woman must be careful not to eat a double banana or her [826] child will be born with webbed toes. Similarly, should she eat a double head of millet it would cause the child to be born with extra fingers.

A man must also take care not to blow up a bladder, such as is used for storing grain, during the pregnancy period. If he happened to do this in the fifth month, for instance, it [753] would mean that the baby would die when it was five months old: if in the seventh month, then when it reached the age of seven months, and so on, until the actual day of birth. The actual death would be caused by a swollen stomach, a punishment sent by Gongbo Mung, from which the child would not recover. This particular precaution

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

843 may not be neglected in order to bring about an abortion, or the early death of the child, since this would also cause the death of the mother. Incidentally, it may be noted that if a baby is seen at any time to be suffering from swollen
[755] stomach (wind?) it is usual to wave a bladder over it which is filled with various kinds of grain and butter.

[824] Here are some more pre-natal precautions. Wild potatoes should not be eaten if found lodged between two stones. Poles should not be stuck into the ground; and it is inadvisable to tie anything into a knot, or drive in nails. It would be well also to avoid putting the small stones in between the large ones to fill up the cracks in building a wall. Care should be taken not to look upon a dying or dead snake, as this would certainly bring misfortune of one sort of another.
[821] One should not look at a solar or lunar eclipse or the child will certainly be stillborn; and in the case of a solar eclipse it would be better to remain indoors all day. If some child has recently died, both its house and the paths it was accustomed to use should be avoided; and it is indeed better to avoid the house of any recently deceased person. No
[845] paint or other colouring matter should be put on the body during the months of pregnancy or the stains will be reproduced on the body of the child. If it is necessary, for any reason, to sew food up in a bag, care should be taken that it is not again taken out from the sewn end, or this will result in breech presentation. If it is necessary to open such a bag the unsewn bottom end should be slit open and the sewn top left intact.

843 There was one small girl in Lingtem who squinted. This
826 was the result, so everyone said, of her father squinting with one eye, perhaps to aim or to see if a roof was straight, during her mother's pregnancy; and nearly every physical defect of this sort, birth-marks, and such-like, is attributed to the neglect of some pre-natal precaution. All these precautions—and there are doubtless many more of which I have no knowledge—must be observed by both parents from the fifth month of pregnancy until three days after the

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

child is born; and during this period it is thought that the father's actions can affect the fœtus equally with those of the mother. It is believed that a newly-born child is not in full possession of its soul until three days after its birth, and for this reason the precautions are observed until this day.

During the time of birth no man is present in the room, and the subject is naturally an impossible one for a male to investigate. Karma said that when he was a boy he was very anxious to see how babies were born, and one day he went unnoticed to a house in order to witness this event. It had only a floor of bamboo slats, so that by standing underneath and looking up he was able to see everything:

"The woman was holding on to a rope, which was suspended from the roof, and was herself being held from behind by another woman. I first saw a large round object appear, which was apparently the baby's head. Every time the mother grunted a little more appeared; but when she ceased to grunt the whole object appeared to contract and disappear. There was complete silence for a bit and then the object seemed to shoot out of the woman's body with great rapidity. I saw that it was the baby.

"I noticed that the woman's vulva was very large and round; but I was not frightened, nor did I feel the least shame. I think I really did not think about the matter at all. I suppose I must have been about eight or nine years of age at the time this happened. I only went because I was very interested to see how a baby was born, and because I wanted to see what a woman's vulva was like. I could not now watch this sort of thing, as it would have too exciting an effect on me."

If the afterbirth does not descend it is usual to sever the child's umbilical cord and tie it to one of the mother's toes. At the same time any Mun who has previously attended her should now come and again wave elephant grass over her. Failure to get rid of the afterbirth is due to the mother having stepped across a ring of straw during pregnancy, an action which is thought to cause the vaginal passage to

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

the following are examples: *Ka-ka*, or *Ma-ma*—Don't; *A-ji* —Take care!; *Bum*—stay there.

Mrs. de Beauvoir Stocks mentions that "deformed children are instantly killed, the mother in a case of that sort being well treated by her husband but badly by her neighbours." But my information does not in any way confirm this wild generalisation. All my informants were horrified at the suggestion that Lepchas practised any form of infanticide. "Such a thing is never done," said Tafoor, "nor have I ever heard of it. Even a monster, such as might be the result of two near relatives marrying, would not be killed. The only case of this sort of which I have ever heard was when, many generations ago, a cow in Talung gave birth to a human child. The people were very frightened and killed it after a week."

In a community which desires children above all things, and in which no stigma attaches to illegitimacy, there would appear to be no reason for indulging in infanticide, and I am convinced that in Jongu it is absolutely unknown. In fairness to Mrs. Stocks, however (whose account is admittedly compiled from odds and ends of information gathered from all over the place), I should add that Miss Scott told me that amongst her Christian Lepcha community she notices a marked tendency for illegitimate children not to survive more than a very few months. If, however, this is due (as I imagine to be the case) to some form of infanticide—slow starvation, for instance, or general lack of care—it is one of the more unsatisfactory results of Mission influence, since members of the Church who give birth to illegitimate children are not looked upon with favour. Missionaries do a great deal of admirable work, but it is a great pity that the Church cannot see its way to compromise in the matters of polygyny and illegitimacy.

Contraception is not known amongst the Lepchas; nor does a woman take any action to induce a miscarriage when she knows that she is about to give birth to an illegitimate child: but in such circumstances should she miscarry she will say nothing about it.